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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT Some Speculations on the State of Stalin's Health
Prior to His Final Illness

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

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- a. Indications of Stalin's probable condition prior to his final stroke.
- b. Whether or not the statements made in the autopsy report offer any evidence on this condition.
- c. Assuming the presence of a serious hypertensive condition prior to Stalin's death, whether or not the medical statements offer any basis for the determination of when this condition became serious.
- d. Assuming the presence of a serious hypertensive condition prior to death, whether or not such a condition might have caused personality changes and, if so, what form they might take.]

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1. The medical reports covering Stalin's final illness describe the typical course of a severe cerebral hemorrhage. They further suggest that Stalin, immediately prior to his death, suffered from severe hypertension although when this condition originated cannot be determined from the available evidence. Stalin's many reported trips to the Crimea for rest, plus his apparent loss of weight as shown in recent photographs of him could both have been part of a prescribed course of medical treatment for cardio-vascular disease of some sort.

- 25X1 2. [] this hypertensive condition had been present for some years, although probably originally only of average severity. The medical treatment received by Stalin during the initial stages of his terminal illness suggests that his medical advisers were not too worried about his condition and felt that he might respond to treatment. If this was in fact the case, it might conceivably indicate that Stalin had not had any previous severe illness of this kind.

3. As far as previous mental deterioration is concerned no evidence is presented in the reports which could establish this. There is, for example, no statement in the autopsy report indicating the presence of infarcts which might, although by no means definitely would, cause such deterioration. Actually even if Stalin had suffered earlier cerebral accidents serious enough to cause cerebral hemiplegia there is no reason to suppose that he also deteriorated mentally as a result.
4. Conversely, even if he did appear to become obstinate or unreasonable in his final years, these qualities would not necessarily be attributable to his medical condition. After all, old age tends to make everyone somewhat "set in their ways".

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5. Based on the medical reports [] Stalin suffered from hypertension for years prior to his death but it is impossible to say exactly how long. This hypertension was not the so-called "malignant" type which is due to changes in the blood vessels of the kidneys but appears to me to have been the ordinary essential or benign type which hastens the degenerative changes in the arteries. The autopsy report mentions nothing about the state of the kidneys and this, together with the fact that Stalin lived to a relatively advanced age, tends to bear out this theory. In addition, his having had a stroke with cerebral hemorrhage would be consistent with a prior existing state of high blood pressure. However, when a serious stroke occurs, blood pressure tends to rise temporarily due to increased intracranial pressure. The figures on Stalin's blood pressure presented in the medical reports, therefore, may not necessarily represent his blood pressure prior to the stroke. Since, however, he had a reported diastolic pressure of 120, we can be quite sure that he was suffering prior to the stroke from serious and prolonged hypertension. Still another piece of evidence tending to confirm this is the reported enlargement of the left ventricle of his heart.

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6. It appears also that his terminal condition was aggravated by the development of auricular fibrillation and probably by either emboli to his lungs or terminal bronchial pneumonia. The fact that he was running a fever and was being given penicillin suggests the pneumonia theory but nothing is definite since nothing appears in the autopsy report on the state of his lungs.

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7. [] the most significant statement in any of the medical reports is the following extract from the autopsy report: "Besides the brain hemorrhage there were established substantial enlargement of the left ventricle of the heart, numerous hemorrhages in the cardiac muscle and in the lining of the stomach and intestine, and arteriosclerotic changes in the blood vessels,

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expressed especially strongly in the arteries of the brain." It is inconceivable to me that under these conditions the stroke which caused Stalin's death was the only one he ever had. In the absence of any evidence proving that Stalin had had previous major strokes, [REDACTED] he suffered from a fairly common medical phenomenon known as "little strokes". Many people have suffered from this condition, which involves a large number of minor strokes occurring over a period of many years. As a noted US pathologist has said, it is the commonest kind of brain pathology we see, but it is often missed clinically. Very minor strokes of this sort, which do not result in the paralysis usually expected in major strokes, may cause all sorts of bizarre symptoms the exact nature of which depends on what minute portions of the brain are affected. Dizziness, vomiting, pains in the abdomen, apathy and personality changes are a few of the commonly encountered symptoms. The best description of the "little stroke" question is an article by Dr Walter C Alvarez entitled "Cerebral Arteriosclerosis with Small, Commonly Unrecognized Apoplexies" which appeared in Geriatrics (Vol I, No 3, May-June 1946; pp 189-216).

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8. Stalin's medical reports definitely suggest this condition. It is, however, impossible to say when it initially occurred or what its effects were. There are two parallel cases in recent US history, namely Presidents Wilson and Roosevelt. In the case of Wilson, his secretary reported a pronounced personality change following a relatively minor illness from which he apparently fully recovered. Roosevelt's condition was readily apparent from the slight slurring of his speech which could be noted following his return from the Yalta Conference. It is safe to say, in Stalin's case, that some sort of symptoms resulted from the conditions described above. Without either knowing him personally or having additional information on his earlier medical history, it is impossible to say what form these symptoms took or when they occurred.

-end-

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